

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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SUBJ: SYRIAN MEDIA REPORTING SINCE BEGINNING OF NEW YEAR

1. SUMMARY: PRINCIPAL THEMES IN SYRIAN MEDIA REPORTING AND COMMENTARY REFLECT LOCAL VIEW OF INTERNALLY DIVIDED AND INTERNATIONALLY ISOLATED ISRAEL ADOPTING NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD SC DEBATE AND PERHAPS PLANNING MILITARY VENTURE; SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN EFFORTS TO COORDINATE ARAB STRATEGY TO ACHIEVE POLITICAL GAIN IN SC IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN MOMENTUM GENERATED DURING UNGA; U.S. PRESSED BY ISRAEL TO HEW TO ISRAELI LINE IN SC BUT NONETHELESS EVINCING SOME DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY, AND EGYPT ASSOCIATED WITH ISRAELI APPEAL THAT UN RESES 242 AND 338 NOT BE AMENDED SHOWING AGAIN CAIRO'S NON-SUPPORT FOR PALESTINIAN CAUSE SINCE "DEFEATIST SINAI AGREEMENT." END SUMMARY.

2. JAN 12 UNSC DEBATE. SYRIAN MEDIA REPORTING AND UNCLASSIFIED

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COMMENTARY SINCE JAN 1 PORTRAY UPCOMING SC DEVOTED

TO DISCUSSION OF PALESTINE QUESTION AS "IMPORTANT POLITICAL GAIN FOR ARAB STRUGGLE" AND USEFUL FORUM TO MAINTAIN PRESSURE ON ISRAEL, EGYPT AND U.S. JAN 1 AL-THAWRAH REFERRED TO INTERNATIONAL NEWS AGENCY REPORTS THAT EXPECTED "NEW VICTORIES FOR PALESTINE ISSUE INCLUDE AMENDING SC RES 242 IN PALESTINIAN INTEREST." JAN 7 PRESS ALSO STATED THAT "ARAB STATES WORKING TOWARD AMENDING RESES 242 AND 338 TO INCLUDE REFERENCE TO PALESTINIAN RIGHTS IN VIEW OF FACT THAT 242 REFERS TO PALESTINIANS AS REFUGEES WHILE 338 DOES NOT MENTION PALESTINIANS AT ALL." PRESS ALSO HIGHLIGHTS SYRIAN EFFORTS TO PROMOTE ARAB UNITY AND COORDINATION OF ARAB POSITION TO ENHANCE CHANCES FOR ARAB SUCCESS IN SC, MENTIONING VISIT BY JORDANIAN PRIME MINISTER RIFAI TO DAMASCUS AND KHADDAM TRIP UNDERTAKEN TO SAUDI ARABIA, KUWAIT AND OTHER GULF STATES CARRYING MESSAGES FROM PRES ASAD TO NUMBER OF ARAB LEADERS TO COORDINATE SC POSITIONS.

3. ISRAEL. SYRIAN MEDIA DEPICT ISRAEL AS STILL REELING FROM ARAB SUCCESSES AT LAST UNGA SESSION, CONFRONTING INCREASED DOMESTIC TURMOIL AND DIVISION AND MORE PRONOUNCED INTERNATIONAL ISOLATION, PRESSING U.S. TO USE VETO TO OPPOSE MODIFICATION OF 242 AND 338 AS "OBLIGATION IMPOSED BY AGREEMENTS ANNEXED TO SINAI ACCORD," DECIDING TO BOYCOTT SC SESSION BECAUSE OF ITS FEAR THAT SC WILL IMPOSE INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENT ON ISRAEL, SUFFERING FROM ESCALATION OF PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE ATTACKS WITHIN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND OPPOSITION ON PART OF WEST BANKERS TO ISRAELI SETTLEMENT PLANS, AND CONTEMPLATING INCREASE OF SETTLEMENTS IN OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND NEW "MILITARY VENTURE" TO PUNISH SYRIA FOR ITS STAND.

4. EGYPT. EGYPTIANS VIEWED BY MEDIA AS READILY ACCOMODATING THEMSELVES TO ISRAELI DETERMINATION TO BLOCK ANY ATTEMPT TO AMEND 242 OR 338 AS RESULT OF EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP SINCE SINAI ACCORD. SAMIR ARBASH OF AL-BAATH CRITICIZED FORMER FAHMI'S STATEMENT AS "EVIDENCE HE WANTS PALESTINIANS TO REMAIN UNCLASSIFIED

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NOTHING MORE THAN REFUGEES. HIS VIEWPOINT, WHICH IS VIEWPOINT OF ENTIRE EGYPTIAN RULING SYSTEM, CONFORMS WITH ISRAELI VIEWPOINT. FAHMI WILL HEAR REPLY FROM SC AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, AND EGYPT WILL BECOME MORE ISOLATED." ANOTHER COLUMNIST ACCUSES "SIGNATORIES OF SINAI AGREEMENT" OF PROMOTING RE-CONVENING OF GENEVA CONFERENCE "AFTER FAILURE OF STEP-BY-STEP POLICY AND HOLDING OF UNOFFICIAL CONFERENCE IN LIEU

OF GENEVA"IN ORDER TO AVOID JAN 12 SC DISCUSSIONS.

5. UNITED STATES. MEDIA HAVE EXHIBITED SOME AMBIVALENCE TOWARD U.S. FOR EXAMPLE, JAN 3 SANA DISPATCH REPORTED DEMAND BY CHRISTIAN GROUP IN U.S. THAT ISRAEL IMPLEMENT MORE POSITIVE POLICY TOWARD PALESTINE ISSUE. EVEN U.S. THREAT TO USE VETO NOT REPORTED COMPLETELY NEGATIVELY. WHILE JAN 6 PRESS ASSERTED THAT "WASHINGTON FINDS ITSELF ALONE WAVING VETO POWER IN DEFENSE OF ISRAEL'S AGGRESSIVE POLICY," AND JAN 7 REPORT OF DEPT SPOKESMAN'S STATEMENT ON U.S. APPROACH TO SC DEBATE APPEARED IN PARTY NEWSPAPER AL-BAATH UNDER CAPTION "AMERICA ADOPTS ZIONIST VIEWPOINT AT FORTHCOMING MEETING OF SC," JAN 7 PRESS ALSO PUBLISHED REUTERS DISPATCH NOTING THAT "SOME AMERICAN OBSERVERS IN ADDITION TO ISRAELIS FEEL THAT STATE DEPT ANNOUNCEMENT WOULD PERMIT AMENDING SC RESOLUTIONS IN QUESTION (242 AND 338) IF U.S. FELT THAT SUCH AN AMENDMENT WOULD HELP PEACE EFFORT.
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